

SHELTER: A PLAY



C. DAVID COVENEY B.A.,LL.B.



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SHELTER: a play
by Christopher David Leyshon Coveney B.A.,LL.B.

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[Editors note: In converting from MS Word to WordPerfect some of the coding went ary and text may not appear as it should. Also the author was a fall down drunk alcoholic who fell down the basement stairs of his house at the time it burnt down so he was probably trying to escape and in his stupor, opened the wrong door.]

*(Note: It is intended that if this is read in a public reading, more than one person should read it. It is also intended that with very few changes, it can be converted into a play to be performed in a mixed media production on stage. In this day and age, the traditional cubby holes into which works have been shoved, including the whole concept of genre in writing, is increasingly becoming obsolete. As we evolve into more spiritual beings, our art forms will evolve as well. So maybe this **is** just the beginning. The author)*

“ As I stand by the open stairway window, I look out. In the sky, wild clouds are gathering for a storm, like witches flying to a sabbat. Suddenly, I realize that I am leaning on the windowsill of Heaven. I dream of things that never were. I ask: ‘Why not?’”

From : “The New Visions of Handsome Lake”

CHAPTER ONE: "Opening"

Your host is a short, heavyset martial arts type, bald, dressed in black sweats, with a Jesse Ventura type mustache. Even his running shoes are black. He stands in a stark white room that has a hospital look, with six identical beds, covered with white sheets. At one end of the room there is a big black desk with a high black leather chair behind it. A large computer monitor sits on the desk. There is a black desktop reading lamp beside it. There is an easy chair beside the desk. He has just made a pot of coffee on a sideboard at the right side of the room.

"Boy, it's hot as hell in here. I'd better open some windows."

He crosses the room and opens four windows as he talks.

"Ugh. There, that's open. But there's still no breeze. Ugh. Not through that window, either. Let's see now. It's dusk already. This early. 8:30. The summer's almost gone."

He walks back to his coffee machine, and pour himself a cup as he talks.

"I can hear the war drums pounding in the darkness of the night. They are putting on war-paint over there, and I don't mean the kind that hookers wear. But most of them aren't Indians. Well, neither were the guys at the Boston Tea Party.

Well, the coffee is on.

Hi. I'm Butch. Butch Carradine. Nice sounding name if I do say so myself. All I need now is a sidekick named 'Sundance' and I'd be in business.

Welcome to "the New Hope" Shelter for the Homeless. I'm just setting up now. We'll be open for the night real soon. Come on, join me and see how the other half lives.

We're a shelter for the homeless mentally ill. So some homeless folks don't fit our criteria. But don't worry about discrimination here. If you're homeless for very long, you'll soon be mentally ill, too. If you disagree, do you want to try it and find out? Trust me. I've been around a bit and I know.

This is what **The Writer's Digest** calls a day job. Only it's at night. But I'm not a mere Night Watchman. I'm a Front Line worker with the mentally ill. I just get paid like a night watchman, that's all. But that's all right. I can get a lot of my own work done while the guys are sleeping. And crazy people make better company than many. Unlike the suits at snobby straight jobs, the insane are seldom boring.

This job will do for now, until I'm a famous writer like my hero, Hunter S. Thompson. Now there's a guy that can make politics interesting. Why can't we have someone like him for Prime Minister? Well, Sheila Copps doesn't look too bad in leather, and she has nicer legs than Doctor Thompson does. We'll just have to make sure she keeps on inhaling.

I'll bet that girl is over at Tent City now. Suzanne is her name. Just like the song, "Suzanne". She's cool, even if she is half crazy. She takes you down pretty good, and she does serve tea that comes all the way from China. When I met her on the bus today, she said she was going there, to get ready to resist efforts by the police to evict them.

My friend and fellow artist Hank Mandawaub is over there, too. Yeah, I like to paint, too. And I hang with musicians, OK? All us right brain types better stick together, because it's a cold left brain world out there. So far.

Hank had to stay here for awhile, then he found Tent City. I just hope he doesn't lose his temper and use that old gun of his. He was telling me how he dug it up when he got out of the joint and it was still working.

I used to really get off on guns, sorta like my cousin in the Michigan militia. That was a real neat picture of my cousin in the Detroit paper, cradling his rifle like it was his baby. Guns can be like

that. Another buddy of mine, Little Ivan, loved guns, too. He used to sleep with his magnum under his pillow at night, he loved it so much. So I can understand how Hank feels about his gun. Too bad they kicked Ivan out of the army. Said he was unstable. I don't know why. Seems like a good guy to me.

Me, I come to you with empty hands. That's not my idea, it's my sensei's credo. But I'll follow it because I'm his student. It's so nice wearing a uniform at the dojo. Just like the military.

I don't expect too many guests tonight. They're all over at Tent City fomenting a revolution. That means I should have a nice easy night of it. Maybe even get some shut-eye.

Ho - ho - ho - hummm! I do need my beauty sleep these days. I'm not getting any younger. I've gone from training my locks over my forehead to look like Bobby Kennedy to shaving what's left of my hair to look like Jesse Ventura. That's progress for you.

It's the morning after the nineteen nineties. What a hangover! We're half way through 2001. Where's my Space Odyssey? Probably in a pill at Tent City.

He walks back to his desk and opens a drawer, getting out a big white book.

"Don't worry. This isn't the Askashic Record, and you're not dead yet. You'll see. After all, you can still care about homeless people, can't you? That means you're not dead. Not yet anyway. So don't worry about the Judgment.

This here is our log book. My partner Karl and I never see one another, we just leave notes for each other. Each of us works alone. All night, all alone, even the clients are asleep. But you'll see. I can get a lot of work done. Here in this little room, I can take you on quite a trip. And you won't even have to take any dangerous street drugs. That's all been done for you.

He opens the log book, puts it down on the desk, and starts to read..

"Here we are. 'The Beds of Bedlam'. Modern Mental Health, Serving the Homeless."

PROCEDURES MANUAL NEW HOPE SHELTER

DATE: SEPTEMBER 3/01 **STAFF INITIALS:** K.A.

OCCUPANTS:

Bryan Kechego

1. Henry Hess
2. Earnie Manly
3. Jean Argent
4. Ronnie Ryan

Butch sits in the big black chair, turns the lamp on, and starts to read.

"Not too wild a bunch, easy enough to handle. Looks like I may get some sleep if Dog Tag isn't too manic. Let's hope he burned some of that energy off during the day. We never know what they've been up to all day. In the old days, when I worked in a psyche hospital as an attendant, we would get a report from the day staff saying exactly what each was doing. Now, our day time partners are running all over the place, trying to look after the people that are sleeping under bridges, and so forth. Well, that's progress. It's a new century.

Happy Labour Day. Another milestone gone by. How does the old song go: 'Another day older and deeper in debt.' Oh, well...at least I'm not in jail.

Let's see this list again. After awhile we really get to know our clients.

Byran Kechego. We all call him Turtle. He's got a heart condition, but there's still a lot of life left in him. He's an Indian who came up from New England and never went back. But he's a

lovable guy. If you catch him picking your pocket, he'll just smile and say "Old Indian Trick." He'll never quit drinking but he's OK as long as he doesn't run into any of his friends who drink Listerine.

Man, when I started working here, I thought that Listerine was a mouthwash. Boy, was I dumb. It's not only a potent drink, you can even get hallucinations. I wish I had known about that when I was a teen, back in the sixties. Purple microdot Listerine. My old friend Bev would have just loved that. And if she took it, I would have, too. It's been so many years, now, but I still think of her every time I hear "Scarborough Fair."

But the past is dead. Let's get on with life.

Henry Hess. We all call him Dog Tag. He is everybody's favorite Viet Nam Vet. If you ever forget that there were Canadians that fought in the Nam, he'll remind you. But good!

Dog Tag looks like the meanest sonoffabitch you'll ever meet, ten times tougher than any junk yard dog. Still, he's not just another pretty face under a leopard spotted beard. Beneath the grimy overalls and all that grease, he's really smart. He knows his military history pretty good, too. If he hadn't got shell shock, he might have become a great general. Except that he doesn't kiss ass enough to be brass.

Earnie Manly. Tennessee Earnie, they used to call him. He really was a professional musician. They say he might have really amounted to something, once. His star was rising. He was going to be another man in black, another Johnny Cash. That was his idol, Johnny Cash, who calls himself the man in black. He could play and sing like his idol. Unfortunately, he could also drink and drug the way his idol once did. And there would be no saving miracle for this man in black. Now he's getting cold shivers and pains in his swollen right side. He goes into hospital when it gets too bad, but signs himself out as soon as he can. He says he's been in the joint too much, and now he wants to die out on the streets, a free man. Whenever the weather permits it, he prefers to sleep under bridges. He stays here every now and then so he can use the showers.

Old Tennessee has been in real bad shape lately. I've had to send him to hospital myself a few times. Poor fellow doesn't have much longer to go. So at this point he doesn't see any reason to quit drinking. He knows there's no way he'll ever get a liver transplant, they'd never waste the medical resources on him. He's dying anyway, so he may as well die happy. And he's only happy when he's drunk. He almost seems eager for it all to be over with. Still, I hope he doesn't die on my shift. There's a lot of paper work involved, and there's nothing I hate like doing legal paperwork. Boring. It's not like really writing.

Jean Argent. A Jolly old French Canadian lumberjack with a beard and a book, and a belly like a keg of Whiskey blanc. He's always got books with him.

When he was younger, he had an MBA. After he served five years for fraud he couldn't get work again in business. That was twenty years ago. Since then he has lived a life worth telling, but it is no doubt a tale that will never be told. He can't seem to get started on the first chapter.

I hear that Jean Argent got away with over a hundred grand. It's funny that he can't get work. There must be lots of room in the business world for a crook that smart. Maybe he's overqualified.

Ronnie Ryan. The famous bank robber. At least to hear him talk about it. And he will. What a thing to be proud of. Maybe he did rob twenty-five banks before they caught him, but he did eight years for it. By the time they had caught him he had spent all the money he got on booze and broads. So he didn't even have a nest egg waiting for him somewhere when he got out. Now a real smart crook would have put that money in a Swiss bank account. Then he could have something for his retirement. That's what Jean Argent keeps telling him anyway. So why didn't

Jean do that himself? Ronnie has a bit of brain damage, so he isn't bright enough to ask that question. Well, I'm staying out of it. It's not for me to tell the robbers how to play cops and robbers. After all, I don't tell the cops how to do their business. I just call 'em up and let them do their thing.

Well, lets see what Karl has written in the daily record.

LOG NOTES: HANK MANDAWAUB CAME IN AND GOT A RED GYM BAG WE HAD BEEN KEEPING FOR HIM.

He has taken his Art stuff to Tent City. Looks like they are really settling in there. If they could really stay there, they might build their own little village. I hear that Toronto's Tent City turned into a small town, compete with trailers and toilets and television sets. All the luxuries of modern life.

LOG NOTES:

HANK MANDAWAUB CAME IN AND GOT A RED GYM BAG WE HAD BEEN KEEPING FOR HIM.

"That's his Art stuff. He's still at Tent City. That Ojibway Indian is a good friend. I hope he doesn't get hurt when the cops move in.

Hank is pretty good as an artist, even after his brain annurism. Or whatever they call it. Blood vessels burst in his head and messed him up a bit. God, that could have happened to me back in my Power Lifting days! They say drugs did it. That means it could happen to anybody. Scary!

I've seen Hank draw while he was sitting in our easy chair here. It's kinda cute the way he signed one of his painings. KTALGSIO. I asked him what it meant and he said: "Kill them all. Let God sort it out." Little Ivan would get a real gas out of that!

Hank is a real strong Indian activist. Why wouldn't he be? He was there the night that Dudley George was shot. I remember him saying "I saw him fall. I saw him go down. I saw him die.' Seeing something like that will sort of stay with a guy.

Lets see what else happened while I was off the last few days.'

'DOG TAG IS REALLY MANIC TONIGH T. HOPE HE CRESTS SOON.'

"Yep. Even in our notes, we call him "Dog Tag.' Quite a character."

JEAN ARGENT WAS RESTLESS AND PACING. LEFT AT 4:00 A.M.."

"Four o'clock in the morning, That's the time they say that we are closest to the other side. That's when things come to me. Sometimes. Edgar Cayce says it involves channeling your Higher Self. But sometimes I'm not so sure."

THE REST OF THE GUYS SLEPT OK.

CHAPTER TWO: HOMECOMING

“Knock, Knock, Knock, Who’s there in the Name of Beelzebub? Sometimes I do feel like the Porter of hell-gate, since this place is just like hell for anyone who is not already there. Street People and madmen call it home. Others call it hell. I guess it all depends on your point of view. For many, this hell does not exist - until they get here.

All right, I’m coming.”

Butch goes over to an entrance to the left of the room. He opens a door. He returns to the room with two men following him. The first man is 58, and is still vigorous, looking, lean and rangy, like a starving wolf. His beard is grizzled, spotted, black and white. This is Dog Tag, and he wears the camouflage of an old army uniform, including an army cap. He carries a tan canvas gym bag with him. He is followed by a Native Canadian wearing faded blue jeans and a Blue Jay baseball cap, and staggering slightly. Turtle is 50 and looks like 65. Butch has his back to them as he walks over to his chair.

“Hi Dog Tag. Have a nice day?”

“No.”

Dog Tag stops to talk. Turtle goes over to one of the beds and collapses on it, falling face down.

“What happened?”

“Tennessee Earnie died today.”

“How did it happen?”

“He was walkin’ with Jean Argent and Jimmy Skelton and Marty Moore and me. He just fell down and died. There was a real peaceful look on his face, like he was happy or something. He seemed to be smiling at us. I felt his pulse right there, and I checked for any breath.”

“When is the funeral?”

“We already had it.”

There comes another knocking at the door. Butch goes over and lets Jean Argent into the room. Jean is big and lumbers in. His bearded face is red and his hair is white, sort of like Santa Claus. He wears heavy work boots, blue jeans, and a red and blue plaid shirt and a Montreal Expos baseball cap. He carries a dark green garbage bag with him. It contains all his worldly goods. He stops beside Dog Tag and says:

“What’s up?”

“I’m telling him about the funeral. About the funeral that we gave Tennessee Earnie.”

“Yeah. Cool. We gave him a real good send-off.”

“Wait a minute...what sort of send-off was it?” *said Butch.*

Dog Tag smiles sadly and says: “Well, we knew the city wouldn’t pay for a funeral, just cremation with the minimum plot the law allows to bury the ashes.”

Jean Argent laughs a little and adds: “At least they don’t flush them down the toilet. I read that some rich broad in the States did that with her husband’s ashes.”

Dog Tag nudges his friend. “Don’t tell the Premiere. It might give him ideas. They could save money that way.

So us bums, we decided to gather ‘round his carcass and give him the best funeral that we could come up with”

“Dog Tag here sang the hymn and I said a few words.”

Dog Tag bursts into tune with little known part of “ the Battle Hymn of the Republic” His voice is deep and strong :

“I have seen him in the watchfires of a hundred neighb’ring camps...”

Then he hummed a bit, and continued:

“Christ was born among the lily pads,

Away across the sea,

With a Glory in His bosom

That transfigures you and me,

Christ hath died to make men Holy,

Let us Live to make men free,

As truth goes marching on.”

Jean smiles and says:

“See, he knows the song all through. Most folks just know the Glory Alleluia part.”

“The Union troops really did sing that as they went into battle against the Confederate army. For some, slavery was a moral issue. Christian churches condemned slavery. Except for the Southern Baptists, who formed their own group back then.”

Jean pats him on the back: “This guy shoulda been a college Prof.”

“I just read a lot of military history. It’s sort of a hobby with me. Just like General Eisenhower, I was always interested in the US Civil War.”

Jean just smiles and says: “Cool, man.”

“Well, Butch, none of us belong to any Church. Nor did Tennessee. So we asked Santa Claus here to say a few words.”

Jean stands back a step, and clears his throat:

“Well, Tennessee, I guess you’ve just had the big one, Or whatever. But at least it’s over.

Your feet won’t hurt no more from pounding the pavement all day. The long lost dreams of yesterday will no longer haunt your sleep.

Wherever you go now, it can’t be any worse than where you’ve been. And someday soon, we’ll join ya. ‘Til then, we’re gonna miss ya, buddy...friend...That’s what I said. Sorta.”

“Those words from the heart were more sincere than anything you would hear in a Church, guys.” *Says Butch.*

Jean smiles again, his usual too sweet smile, and says: “then we called 9-1-1 from a pay phone up the street and watched as an ambulance came and got him.”

“We gave him his funeral. The City will cremate him and bury the ashes. His name will not go on, and he will be forgotten. So will we all, all us street people.”

Again, Jean smiles, as he is often wont to. It is a sardonic smile. “But you know what? After awhile, nobody visits the rich people’s graves either, so now he’ll be equal to them, as he never was when he was alive.”

“Won’t the snobs just love that. Now they are no better than the lowest bum.”

“But if the lowest bum is still alive, he’s better off than any of them. Because the bum can still enjoy nature, and the basic things like sunshine and a hot shower. The dead rich guy can’t. You got a towel so I can take a shower? I’ll think about dead rich guys’ graves when I pee.”

Butch gets a key from his desk. He goes to the closet off to the right side of the room, and unlocks it. He tosses a dark green towel to Jean, who catches it cheerfully and walks to the left of the room, and opens the door. He turns back to 'Butch':

At least you guys got a clean can. A man can have a shit and a read and a shower here. There's lots out there who can't."

Butch shrugged and said: "Yeah. I know. People take so much for granted. I remember going to the can at Union Station in Toronto, and there was a homeless man there stripped naked using the sink to give himself a sponge bath. He was naked except for his shoes. He was old and fat and ugly. It was gross."

"You didn't call the cops on him?"

"No. Of course not. 'Live and let live', that's my philosophy."

There is a loud knocking at the door.

"Knock, knock, knock, in the name of the other devil, who's there?" *He says, as he gets up and goes to the door.*

"Well, hello there, Ronnie Ryan. Do you need a bed for the night?"

"Yes, Sir. Yes, sir. Yes, Sir."

With that, Ronnie Ryan enters the room. He is tall and athletic looking, and wears a long topcoat, shiny shoes, and white gloves. He seems to be wearing the dress code of the wealthy. He smiles a broad grin, like a traveling salesman or a television evangelist.

"Hi-dee-ho! I do indeed need a bed for the night, my friend."

"Well, Robbie, those clothes I gave you from our store room sure do look spiffy. You could wear them to the Hunt club."

"Thank you, friend. May I borrow your Bible to read for awhile?"

"You may indeed."

Butch gets a Bible from a drawer in his desk. Robbie goes to one of the beds. He sits down and starts to read. Dog Tag tosses his gym bag on one of the beds. He gets himself a coffee while Butch gets out a book to read from a bag beside his desk. He turns the light on and starts to read.

Dog Tag takes a magazine out of his bag, and takes it over to Butch. As he does so, Robbie Ryan takes his coat and shoes off and lies down on a bed next to Turtle, and goes to sleep.

"Here. I found this for you, Doctor Butch. Thanks for fixing up my hand last week."

"That was just some bandage and tape."

"It's more than I woulda got on the street."

"What's this? 'The Legion.' That's a good magazine. This is six years old."

"Someone was throwing that out. I found it in the garbage. Can you imagine that? Here, there's an article you might like to read."

He takes the book and looks through it, and finds an article. He folds the magazine back, open at the article. He hands it to Butch, who reads from it.

"'Canada's Wartime Nurses.' That looks interesting. I'm writing for the magazine 'Military History', so I might be able to pitch that.'"

"I know. I keep an eye out for things for you."

"Thanks, Dog Tag."

"Us vets gotta stick together, right? Keep an eye out for one another. If we don't no one else will."

Hey, I got a great song for you. "

He steps back and stands at attention as he sings, this song to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic. He moves about, naturally, like a professional singer would :

“John Brown’s baby has a cold upon his chest,
John brown’s baby has a cold u[on his chest,
John Brown’s baby has a cold upon his chest,
as truth goes marching on...
Glory, Glory, Hallelulah,
Glory, Glory, Alleluia,
Glory ,Glory, Alleluia,
As truth goes marching on...”

Butch stands up and goes over to him:

“Very good, Dog Tag. Very good. But there’s people trying to get to sleep here.”

“All right. I’ll be quiet. I’ll sit right here in this easy chair while you read that article I gave you. You used to be a nursing assistant at the same psychiatric hospital that my dad worked at. You could have been a military nurse if you had wanted to be.”

“It’s an interesting article, Dog Tag. But it is mostly about Nursing Sisters.”

“So get a Nun costume. I’ll bet they have some in the Tender Trap. Nice Rubber ones, better than the outfits the real nuns wear.”

“But Dog Tag, rubber can be awful hot in this weather. I remember using Scuba gear in this sort of weather. When its this hot, her rubber costume could put your dominatrix in a very bad mood. And you do not want to have a dominatrix that is really angry. Do you?”

“Well, it was an idea. You’d have made a great Nun. You could be another Saint Theresa. She was kinda mystic like some of you martial arts guys. Or the Knights Templar. “

“Hmm. This is interesting. Another official myth exploded! We were always told that women made significant strides towards equality during World War II. Here it says that most were employed in traditional women’s roles such as cooks, clerks and secretaries...and nurses. Many women decided not to join u p because they were not going to be given any meaningful work. My own mother felt that way. That’s why she didn’t join up. She stayed on the great Lakes boats, where she could at least set sail as a cook. Later on, as a writer taking a writers’ course that she paid good money for, she was told that women work on boats.”

Dog Tag puts on a mock English accent.

““Ey, matey, in the days of piracy, there was Lady pirates. And equality on the pirate ships. They even elected their captains. An, if the captain screwed up, they could un-elect ‘em at any time. The pirates ‘ad recall before the Reform party did.

An’ even on ‘er majesty’s ships, some officers took their wives with them. Oi thinks the ladies must ‘ave insisted. After all, you can’t leave such ‘earty men to the mercy of the cabin boys, now can you.”

He stands up and starts singing again:

“The cabin boy, the cabin boy,
That naughty little nipper,
He stuffed his ass with broken glass,
And circumcised the skipper.”

Jean Silver comes back in his underwear. He is carrying his clothes. He walks over to the bed where he has left his bag and lies down, hanging his clothes up neatly on the

floor.

Robbie Ryan gets up and goes over and gets a coffee. He talks to Butch and Dog Tag.

"I did rob twenty one banks, I did. Yes, sir. I did. I was famous all over when they caught me. It was in all the newspapers."

He returns the Bible that he had borrowed.

"Thank you for the Bible, good sir. Thank you. As the good Lord told the Prophet Isaiah, "I will restore to you the years that the Locusts hath eaten." He will answer your prayers, you know. "

Butch takes the Bible and puts it back in the drawer. Robbie Ryan goes over and shakes Dog Tag's hand.

"Bless you, brother. Bless you."

"You'd better be careful what you pray for. You just might get it."

"While I was doing those robberies, I had lots of women partying with me. Like I was really somebody, Lots of broads and lots of booze. Just like the rich guys. I was rich too. But I blew it all."

Butch leans back in his chair with his hands over his head, and says smugly: "How much time did you get?"

"Eight years. I got, I did."

"You should have stuck to playing the lottery."

"Awww...you know I'm never going to win that. Well, good night gentlemen, good night. I'm going to be for the night. Tomorrow is another day."

He drains his coffee and throws it into a garbage pail beside the desk. Then he walks over to his bed and lies down.

Dog Tag leans close to Butch and says confidentially:

"I love reading about the Holy Crusades. Things got screwed up there, too, and Sulamain the Magnificent outmaneuvered Richard the Lion Hearted, who had to withdraw. If that was today, they would have fought to the last man so the brass wouldn't look bad. But things were different back then. Richard even lead the troops into battle himself, just like General Custer. You wont see no Canadian General doing that. Not since Colonel Stone, and that was fifty years ago. At least the Crusaders had a holy cause to fight for. Not like the 'Nam. I think I know how the Confederate Soldiers felt after the Civil war. They saw that their friends' lives had been wasted, and all for nothing."

"Thanks for the magazine."

"You can keep it."

"Thanks. I think I can pitch an article about wartime nursing. I'll try "L'Esprit de Corps." You'd like that magazine, Dog Tag. It speaks up for the enlisted man."

"Like Sad Sack comics used to."

"Yeah. Exactly."

He yawns. Then he says:

"Did you catch the weather forecast before you came in for work?"

"It's supposed to be sunny and hot again."

"I've got a job t do tomorrow, doing black top. The guy is gonna pay me under the table. I isn't much, but I need the dough to buy tobacco."

"Thank God I quit a few years ago. You know, I used to train on cigars and beer, just like my hero Dick the Bruiser, the wrestler who always wore black trunks into the ring. It

took me years to quit smoking cigars. Now the Bruiser, there was a regular guy for you. My kinda guy.”

“Isn’t that the guy who got in that bar-room brawl in Detroit with Alex Karas?”

“Yeah. And I don’t think that was fake. The Bruiser had a tag team partner named Dr. Jerry Graham who was sort of a godfather to Vince McMahon, the new P.T. Barnum. I hear that Bruiser and the doctor were good boozin’ buddies.”

“I used to booze a bit, too. But I quit it years ago.”

“So did I. But I hear Doctor Jerry had a hard time of it. He went from main events down to being a jobber for other wrestlers, putting them over to make them look good. But when I was a kid, he was almost like a God. He was just like my Uncle Billy the Rosicrucian who taught me al about the Eastern Religions while he had a few beers.”

“I just hope those kids they’ll have on working with me tomorrow can pull their weight. You know blacktop. I know you know it. They’ll spend most of their time drinking beer. Kids these days just don’t know the value of work. You know, at my first job, I got a dollar an hour.”

“So did I. But it went a lot further back then.”

“Well, I am going to bed now. Its been a long day. Sure feels strange, looking at the bed old Tennessee used to use all the time.”

He gets up and wanders across the room. He lies down on a bed in his clothes, and pulls his cap over his face.

Butch gets up and goes over and puts the lights out, then goes back, sits down by his lamp. And resumes reading.

CHAPTER THREE: "CASTLING"

For a few minutes, Butch sits alone, reading. Then he looks at his watch, then picks up a phone from the desk. He dials a number, and sits back in his chair.

"Women's shelter, Mary speaking."

"Hello, Mary? Butch here."

"Hi, Butch."

"How's it going over there?"

"We've only got three in tonight."

"We're a bit slow, too."

"A lot of them are gone to Tent City. They can do their own thing there. Just like they had their own place. They can even have sex."

"I hear there's a lot of Listerine out there."

"Among other things. Listen, did you get a Mexican guy over there tonight?"

"No. We didn't. Not yet, anyway."

"Well, we've got his wife. Children's Aid has their four kids."

"Because of abuse?"

"No. They just need somewhere to go. There's no place that she can take the kids. So Children's Aid had to take them for now. I swear, these days they'd split up the Holy family if they couldn't find room at the Inn."

"Are you the Blessed Virgin Mary?"

"Now cut that out. This is a business phone."

"And I'd like to do some business on it."

"Not that kind of business."

"You're a good old Catholic School Girl, aren't you?"

"Listen. Did you hear what happened while we were off?"

"What?"

"We had a new client. She was dressed up in a black rubber dress just like a hooker. You know, one of those kinky types. She was wearing clothing that was a way too hot for this weather. Like she was dressed for some funny business. She looked real upset, like someone had given her a hard time. She was bruised and she was crying. Well, our girls let her stay the night, and they found out that she was a he. You might get her tonight. I mean him."

"How's she gonna fit in with my guys?"

"Well, how's he gonna fit in with my women?"

"Ho-boy. We got a problem."

"Relax. The he-she might not show up."

"Yeah. Let's hope not. We've got a men's shelter and a women's shelter. We're just not equipped for someone in between."

"Yeah. Well, it's time for me to get some rest. I've got to work at that Nursing Home in the Morning. You know, I get paid twice as much there as I do here?"

"Yeah. You know, I sometimes think they figure that this is just a second job for us. Only it's often the only job we have that pays."

"How's the writing coming?"

"I just did a piece on a forum they had on Homelessness."

"I wanted to go to that."

“You’re going to have to read my article.”

“What’s the name of that paper that you write for?”

“Motor City Madness. It’s a Community Newspaper for the East End.”

“Cute name.”

“Many of our readers work at one of the auto plants, so the Editor coined a name to reflect that. It comes from Gordon Lightfoot’s old song, “Black Day in July.” It was about the Detroit riots back in 1967. It has a line that goes: ‘Motor City madness, has gripped the countryside.’ The song was a big hit back when it came out. You don’t hear it much anymore. Like none of that happened.

Few people know it, but back then, we almost had our own race riot with the Indians. It all started at a pub where my dad and I used to drink. The Grog Hotel. We’d go there on a Saturday night to watch the people get into fights. It was better than pro wrestling. But this being Canada, they kept our near riot out of the papers.”

“Wow. Our very own race riot. I remember the Detroit riots.”

“So do I. I wanted to go over and get one of those free TV sets people were carrying out of the stores, but they stopped us at the border. What a bummer.”

“Spoil sports. Well, good night now. Take care.”

“Good night. Pleasant dreams.”

“Pleasant dreams to you, too. Bye.”

He hangs up the phone, and gets out some papers from his drawer.

“Now to get to work at my second job. Or is it really my first? My career as a writer. Maybe I’ll make a living at it. Someday.

I read on this one Internet site about a lawyer in the states who finally was able to quit his day job. On his last day, he stood on top of his desk at his law office and danced a little jig and took some scissors and cut up his necktie.

At least with this job, I don’t have to wear a neck tie. But if I was writing full time at home, I might not even have to get dressed. I could sleep all day. Come to think of it, I’m doing that now what with this night job and all.

Well, let’s get on with proof-reading the hard copy of my article.”

New Hope for the Homeless? (1056 words)

On August. 16, 2001, it almost seemed as if Motor City was experiencing a flashback to the nineteen sixties. The Federal Housing Minister met with his provincial counter-parts at the Jubilee hotel. Outside, in the pouring rain, there was a massive demonstration by homeless people, many having come into town from Toronto and Quebec.

The Night before, there had been a forum sponsored jointly by The Motor City Homeless Coalition, The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, CAW Locals 27 and 1520, and the National Housing and Homelessness Network. It was held at First Saint Andrew’s Church. That forum was very informative. It became clear that there is a problem of homelessness in Canada It has been categorized as a man-made national disaster.

Jan Richardson, the Executive Director of Women’s Community House and Chair of the Motor City Homeless coalition, chaired the meeting on August 15. Several speakers addressed the audience, representing a variety of organizations.

Harold McNaughton of Toronto, who was once homeless himself, said that the

answer is not hostels but housing. People need a place of their own, a place where you can feel good about yourself. Feeling good about yourself is the beginning of the solution.

Tina Stevens of Motor City is a Board Member of Native Inter-Tribal Housing and of the Southwestern Ontario co-operative Housing Federation, known as SWOTCH. She said that she is tired of coming to meetings like this one and seeing nothing come of them. For years, politicians have seen the problem and done nothing about it. She urged the government to reverse the downloading of services. She asked "What will it take to make the ministers look out of their windows in their hotel and see the tent city?"

Cathy Crowe of Toronto is a street person and co-founder of the Toronto Disaster Relief organization. She said that the problem of homelessness in Canada fits the International criteria for the use of the word "disaster". Many hotels that are being used to house the homeless have virtually become hostels. Hostels in Toronto are unsanitary and unsafe. Indeed, many shelters do not meet the UN standards for a refugee camp. There is an overflow from the hostels into the streets. On the streets of Toronto, there are two to four deaths each week.

Bill Monette and Lucie Poirer represented Quebec based FRAPRU, from "frappe rue", meaning "hit the street". They said that the people who are living with the problem should be at the forefront of the struggle for their rights. Housing is a right. The private market is incapable of providing housing. Thus, they are opposed to giving private landowners money to provide housing. FRAPRU favour "socializing" housing.

The position of the Quebec activists gets support from figures broadcast by the CBC on August 16 indicating that social housing covers 4% of our population, and 5 % of that of the US. In Western Europe, it covers 20 % of the population. Thus, like the Americans, we are behind in the development of social housing.

Motor City Councilor Susan Eagle spoke on the panel. She said that we rival Toronto for people trying to find homes. "I don't feel that we're alone in Motor City with these problems. We have got friends across the country." She added. The attendance of so many from out of town at both the forum and the demonstration the day after would prove her right.

Jack Layton, the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, has written a book on the subject. (It is available in the Public Library system.) He said that it's hard to get those affected by the problem to come out to meetings when they are trying to figure out how to survive. Many have to decide whether to eat or pay the rent. He objected that the plan proposed by the Federal Minister of Housing Gagliano would not provide housing for those most in need.

(Some of the Ministers do recognize this fact. A press release from the office of Ontario Housing Minister Chris Hodgson, who chaired a meeting of the Provincial Ministers the day before they met with the Federal Minister, indicated that the provinces were concerned that the plan as proposed by the Federal government would not allow them to serve those most in need. A copy of this press release was distributed at the forum.)

Michael Shapcott of the National Coalition for Housing said that the polls show that most Canadians see homelessness as a serious problem. 79% of them say that food banks and shelters are not a solution. 67% say that the government must spend more money on the problem. The Ministers know how serious the problem is. "These guys aren't stupid." So why do they continue to cut funds? It's because there is not enough political pressure being brought to bear on them.

He added that political pressure is starting to work. He added that once we get the money, we must target it to those who need it most.

Provincial Liberal Housing Critic David Caplan spoke from the audience. He told about

a visit to a shelter. He noted that people in shelters are very reluctant to talk. Still, one man approached him with his story. He had been an MBA. He lost his job. Then he lost his home. His wife and children left him. He wound up on the streets. Caplan added: "The problem is more than just statistics. He could have been me and I could have been him. That's all I've got to say."

He also provided written material summarizing the problem. Before the meeting, he indicated that homelessness is a great concern to him. He worries especially about the children who are being hurt by it. Many families w with children are homeless.

At the forum and later at the demonstration, buttons were distributed saying 1 % with the symbol "^^" above it.. The button refers to the fact that 1% of government spending goes on housing. Doubling that would mean adding another 1% of government spending to the funds available for housing. (see website at www.tao.ca/~tdrc)

On August 16, the demonstration went ahead in the pouring rain. Later that day, after the communiqué from the Ministers meeting gave support for help to the homeless, several of the speakers at the forum expressed hope that their message had been heard.

"Well, I ran spell check on it. Yep, sounds good. That's what went down all right. That Poier guy was cool. I talked to him after the meeting. He's a little fellow. He reminded me a bit of Rene Levesque, only without the cigarette. I met Levesque once, when he was at Western. My friend Jeff Lawrence organized the show. Jeff came from Montreal. He was an English Canadian supporter of the Parti Quebecois. He figured it would be easier to build socialism an independent Quebec. I wonder what he would have thought of ex-Tory Lucien Bouchard, who was still playing right wing, leading his party? Oh, well, that was back in my "Bev" days. When I was young and idealistic, and in love. That seems like a million years ago now. I wonder whatever happened to Bev? I'll probably never know. But in those days, I thought she was the coolest thing since they combined rye and coke with ice cubes..

Well, that's done. Now for a little fantasy break.

I'll lean back and close my eyes and go to the wrestling matches...Let's see now...

"YA - hoo! Ya - hoo !" The Crowd yells out, as the next event begins with the stylish entry into the ring of one of the participants.

"Whoo!"

"Woo! Woo!"

"EYA YA YA YA!"

We watch from the wings as Chief Arrowhead entered the ring, doing a poor imitation of an Indian war dance. The chief wears buckskins and a full feathered war bonnet. He looks like an old dime store Indian set in motion by some timeless magic. His craggy, chiselled face and hook nose give him the look of a weathered and wizened old chief.

His real name was Joe Scalise and he was an Italian from the Bronx. When he started this act, he'd never even met an Indian.

The crowd cheers the "chief" as he does his little dance into the ring. To them, he represents the Noble Red Man.

Now the BOOS begin as the Swamp Rat and his girl Tony Tulips enter the arena. Swamp Rat's thick black hair was wild and his full beard was scraggly and unkempt. His hairy chest and arms glisten beneath his open leather vest. The Words on the back of his vest say, simply, "Swamp Rat". He wears pants that look like overalls. His garbage green pants are stained in places with some dark material. He wears calf-high old black rubber boots that could have been used by a fisherman - or a sewer worker. In a word, he looked dirty.

His girl followed him, looking downcast and obedient. She has a cute round face like a

full moon in springtime. Her eyes look far away, as if she were floating among the stars. She looks just like Bev used to look. I wonder what happened to her. It was all so many years ago.

She wears a dark grass green one - piece bathing suit and fashionable dark green rubber booties. She also has a leather vest. Hers reads: "Property of Swamp Rat."

They enter the ring. Swamp Rat gives out with a Tarzan yell as he does so. His girl removes his boots so he can wrestle barefoot. He is not wearing any socks. She goes and sits in the corner, behind the ring post, reverently holding his big rubber boots in her hands. She looks the very picture of humility and resignation.

She is so different from any other woman that I know. Everything about her seems to say: "I am the other side of your society, the part that lives under rocks with the maggots and the worms of the world." With the other druggies.

The match begins.

The men dances warily 'round one another.

Chief Arrowhead catches the wild man in an arm lock. He pulls the long hair of the "Indian" to break the hold, and the chief falls to the mat.

The pattern repeats itself in slightly different form several times, as the match progresses slowly.

Who cares about the wrestling match. Check the girl sitting in the corner, holding the boots as if they were some sort of prize that she had been given. The Valet is always the best part of the wrestling match. Heck, even Hulk Hogan was never as good as when he had Sensational Sherry to put him over. I even remember seeing her in a dark match at the Gardens here in town, where she was a valet for Sergeant Slaughter against the Ultimate Warrior. I don't remember much about the match itself, except for one part. The Ultimate warrior caught Sherry and pulled her skirt down and spanked her in front of everybody. Now that's sports entertainment! Keep your eyes on the prize. Watch the Valet. She's the key player.

The Crowd would look at the Swamp Rat and his girl and say:

"She must be nuts to go for him."

I remember a small girl in my old high school who used to let her runty boyfriend openly torment her, but who fiercely refused any help. She seemed to love it when he twisted her arm or pulled her hair or...whatever. She'd kiss his hand when they met. She even carried his books for him. It was fun imagining what they did in private.

But let's get back to the present. The Chief had finally has enough, and he goes on the warpath with a series of "tomahawk chops" that sort of resembles weak "judo chops", only the one throwing the blow kept a limp wrist while doing so.

Swamp Rat falls all over the ring.

His girl tosses one of his boots to him. He reaches into the boot and seems to take some sort of weapon of it while the Chief conveniently looks the other way, arguing with the referee...He gets up and sneaks up on the Chief from behind. He hits the man in the back of the head with whatever "weapon" it was. Chief Arrowhead falls down and the Swamp Rat pins him.

The crowd lets off a chorus of BOOS.

The wrestlers quickly leave the ring, and all is darkness.

CHAPTER FOUR: "HISTORY LESSON?"

Butch is still sitting in the chair with his eyes closed as Turtle gets up and staggers over to him. He stands there for a moment looking at Butch. Then he clears his throat a couple of times, which startles Butch, who opens his eyes.

"Uh, Hi, Turtle."

"Did I catch you sleeping?"

"No. I was just resting my eyes."

"Keep an eye on me. We're friends aren't we?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, keep an eye on me. I ain't got my nitro. My chest hurts."

"Do you want to go to the hospital?"

"No."

"Your chest hurts?"

"Yeah. You know I got a bad heart."

"Want to go to the hospital?"

"No. They'll just tie me down and test me. The they might wanna keep me for a few days. I don't like it in the hospital."

"Where is your nitro?"

"I don't know. I had it when I was at the soup kitchen. But I don't have it now. I don't know where it is. You know I'm always losin' things."

"I'll call an ambulance to take you to the hospital."

"No. I don't want to go there. I'll go back to bed after I have a cigarette. Keep an eye on me."

"O.K. I will."

"I'll just go outside and have a smoke and I'll be right back. I found a whole lot of good butts today. In a parking lot."

"Somebody must have emptied their ashtray."

"Throwin' away good tobacco. You know, tobacco was sacred to the Indians."

Jean Argent gets up and goes over and pours himself a coffee as Butch and Turtle talk.

Butch coughs a bit, and then says:

"I read that Native Canadians used tobacco in their religious ceremonies."

"Don't give me no 'Native Canadian' stuff. I'm an American, too. I can go in both countries. And I'm an Indian. I ain't no native running around the jungle somewhere. I'm an Indian."

"Are you Ojibway?"

"No. I'm a Mahican. From New Hampshire. Someday soon I'm gonna go back there and see my sister. Someday soon. Oh, my chest. Keep an eye on me. I'll be right back as soon as I finish my smoke."

"O.K."

He leaves the room and Jean saunters up to the easy chair carrying a book.

"Mind if I join you?"

"Go right ahead. I'll share my reading lamp with you. But we gotta keep the noise down. The rest of the guys are trying to sleep."

"O.K."

Jean sits down. Butch shifts the lamp a bit and gets a book out himself. Both start to

read. Jean gets a big magnifying glass from his pocket and uses it to help him read. Then Jean breaks the silence.

"You remember Hank?"

"Yes. He's been here a bit lately. But he's at Tent City now."

"What was that he said about seeing a murder?"

"He said he was there when Dudley George was shot. He was standing beside him. He saw the man go down."

"Oh. "

Jean returns to his book for a moment. Then he looks at the computer monitor and says:

"Does that thing work?"

"Yes. But I'm not using it at the moment."

"Is it connected to the Internet?"

"Yes, it is."

"Can we use it to find out what's going on at Tent City tonight?"

"We'll have to listen to the radio for that."

"Can we use it to find out a bit more about that murder. The one that Hank saw. The killing of Dudley George."

"Say, that does sound like a good idea. I don't see why not. It won't hurt anyone if we check it out."

Butch boots up the computer as Jean goes and stands behind him to look at the monitor. Then Butch gets going on the keyboard.

Jean laughs as he speaks:

"Boy, that's the twenty-first century when even a place like this is computerized."

"We're part of the Department of Health now. Everything in government is computerized these days. It's part of streamlining services, and it helps them to keep better records of who is where."

"You mean it helps them to spy on us."

"Well, to keep records. For their bookkeeping."

"I read that the CIA controls the Internet. It was developed first by the US military. There's a guy in jail in Toronto who is charged with computer fraud for exposing them. He's no crook. If I had had the chances he did, I would have really cleaned up. He didn't even make a profit."

"You're always thinking of the bottom line, aren't you Jean?"

"You know what they say: 'Once an MBA, always an MBA. ' Like I see some of the Trekkies saying they are Klingons. Me, I want to be a Ferengi."

I follow the Ferengi rules of Acquisition, just like any other businessman."

"Me, I'd rather be an Organian."

"A what?"

"An Organian. The group that imposed the Organian treaty on the Klingons and the Federation of Planets. The Organians are a race so advanced that they are beyond material existence. I'll bet they could manipulate their Chi at will, and walk through walls just like a Shaolin Priest."

"Like in the TV program Kung Fu?"

"You. Sir, are a learned scholar."

"And so are you. Hey, there's a lot of web sites on the killing of Dudley George. That's quite something. Even the United Nations has taken an interest. Let's see that one about 'The

Facts of the Case'. Put out by the Coalition for a Public Inquiry."

"OK. Say, this looks like a good summary. 'On September 6, 1995, Dudley George, an Ojibway from Stoney Point Reserve became the first indigenous person this century to be killed in a lands dispute in Canada.

The Stoney Point lands in question were guaranteed by treaty in 1827. In World War I, they were taken over by the Federal Government to be used as a military base. They were to be returned after the war. After decades of negotiations produced nothing but unfulfilled promises, the members of the Ojibway nation moved in to take over the abandoned military base on the land. On September 4, 1995, thirty or so band members, including elders, men women and children occupied the nearby Ipperwash Provincial Park to protest the destruction of their ancient burial ground located there. Dudley George was among them."

"And Hank was right there when it happened."

"Yeah. That's big stuff. Like, most of us remember where we were when President Kennedy was shot. This is sort of like that for the Indians of the Stoney Creek band. It says here that his trailer still stands by the Highway, covered with spray painted editorials about the Tory government. Nearby, lies 'Dudley's ambulance', a disintegrating Chevrolet in which he was rushed to the hospital in Strathroy, fifty kilometers away. In their own small way, that band has set up a memorial. For them, it's big stuff."

"Read on, MacDuff. I don't see so good since I lost my glasses. That's why I use that magnifying glass to read."

"OK. Lets see...where was I? Oh, yeah. The newly elected provincial government immediately ordered the Ontario Provincial Police to 'take steps to remove the Indians from the park'. Existing Provincial Police policies advised avoiding confrontations in standoffs with native bands."

"So in they went, ready to shoot."

"Looks like it. The article goes on: 'Two days later, under cover of darkness, about 40 provincial police officers armed with shields and laser-sighted rifles marched on the park to remove the protesters. Dudley George was killed in the ensuing melee.'

Hey, this other piece is interesting. It looks like the cop that shot Dudley George tried to lie about it, but another officer that was there told the truth. "

"They're not all bad."

"This bit is entitled 'An Ipperwsh Verdict'. Get this: Provincial Court Judge Hugh Fraser said that the cop's story was 'concocted after the fact in an ill-fated attempt to disguise the fact that an unarmed man was shot!' Wow!

That's really something. The Courts usually at least say they believe the cops. The best you can do is to argue that the police officer was mistaken, but here the judge expressly said that they made up a story about Dudley having a gun in order to justify shooting him."

"It makes you wonder how often that sort of thing goes on."

"Out in Saskatchewan, the police are being investigated for taking drunken Indians out into the country and leaving them there in winter so that they would freeze to death. The only way that came to light was when a night watchman saved the life of one of the Indians by helping him."

"Man, this country is getting to be as bad as California."

"I think I can see what sort of things influenced the jury in O.J. Simpson's murder trial."

"Read on, MacDuff."

“Over five years after the death, the Ontario authorities have not yet called an inquest even though one is required by provincial law. Leading Canadian Newspapers, Church, labour, and other organizations have repeatedly called for a Public Inquiry into the events leading to the death of Dudley George. It is believed that the government has refused to order an inquiry because the premiere and his senior cabinet ministers do not want their role in Dudley’s death exposed.

In early December, 1999, the Conservatives used their majority in the Ontario Legislature to stop legislation that would have prompted a public inquiry. Liberal Gerry Phillips, who introduced the legislation that would have prompted a public inquiry, accused the premiere of deliberately stonewalling this issue in hopes that it will fade from people’s memory.

On December 20, 1999, the Premiere told the Legislature that he was at the meeting with the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police before the killing of Dudley George. He said that the Commissioner had wanted an injunction and we gave him one.

On May 2, 2001, he contradicted his earlier statements and issued a letter saying that he had not met with the commissioner in the hours before the events at Ipperwash.

The Liberals renewed their demands for a Public Inquiry.”

“Boy, that sure sounds fishy to me. If he doesn’t have something to hide, why is he so obviously afraid of an inquiry?”

“It’s like that Liberal guy said, he hopes the public will forget. Maybe they will. They’ll all be thinking about ‘Walkerville’ instead.”

“Ontario is a great place as long as you don’t drink the water and don’t breathe the air.”

“Yeah. That’s something else again. Even the Premiere’s rich golf partners have to breathe the air.”

“But not so much of it. They’ve all got Air Conditioning.”

“Not when they’re out playing golf. They’re gonna get black lungs, too. Only they won’t get ‘em as fast as me and you. And I won’t get black lungs as fast as you because I quit smoking.”

“I couldn’t handle all this stress without smoking. Like, man, life on the streets can be really stressful. You gotta hustle just to stay alive.”

“That’s cool. Do your own thing. But I figure that the money I save by not smoking damn near pays my rent! That is, if I buy cigarettes instead of bumming them.”

“Or picking up cigarette butts. You can roll cigarettes using the tobacco from butts and then sell the smokes to straight people. Soon there’s gonna be a good bootleg business again. A guy can make a good buck if he’s sharp about it. That’s the glory of Free Enterprise. The Ferrengi Way.”

Butch turns off the computer as he continues:

“Well, that’s the background on Dudley George anyway.”

“And Hank was there when it happened.”

“He says he was and I believe him.”

“Seeing something like that can really scar a guy. No wonder he’s bitter.”

“Thanks. I think I understand a bit better now.”

“Yeah. So do I.”

Both go back to reading. Turtle comes back into the room and goes over to Butch.

“Hi. I finished my smoke now. I’m going to bed again. Watch out for me.”

"I will."

"You know, soon I'm going to the boneyard."

"Are you OK now?"

"Yeah. But I need my nitro. For the pain."

"I'll send you to the hospital."

"Nawww. I'll be OK. Keep an eye on me."

"OK"

"Goodnight, Butch."

"Goodnight, Turtle."

Turtle goes over and falls into bed again. The other two go on reading in silence for a moment. Then Jean Silver looks up from his book and says:

"You know, Butch, that reminds me just a bit of Louis Riel, the Metis leader that MacDonald had hanged because it was politically convenient to do so. His execution upset everyone in French Canada."

Dog Tag gets up and puts a cigarette in his mouth. He walks over to them.

"I always like Riel. He was colourful. Not many Canadians have been. Not openly, anyway. They kept their colourful parts hidden, just like Prime Minister MacKenzie King, who held seances to contact his dead mother."

Dog Tag says: "I wish I could speak with mine"

"So do I, Dog Tag. So do I."

Jean Argent holds up the book he has been reading, and says:

"This here book is a reproduction of Louis Riel's diaries. He was a very interesting guy. He called himself 'Louis David', after the Biblical Prophet. He believed that he was having visions from God, just like Joan of Arc."

Dog Tag chimes in: "They can't have been as powerful as Joan's visions. She got burned at the stake. All he could do was to get himself hanged."

"He was still a martyr in the eyes of many. The Author here describes him as 'Canada's most noted opponent of the established order' He saw himself as a Prophet of God. And he did predict things. Get this:

'I am the banner of the Lord. He bears me like a flag unfurled. Bards will lift their voices. The Spanish People will fly to the rescue of the North West people and of New France.' Isn't that starting to happen? The Hispanic people are becoming more and more powerful in the United states, and eventually, that will change the face of North America. The USA will become bilingual. French Catholics can ally themselves with Spanish Catholics. Just think about that."

Butch shrugs and says: "I had better be nice to my friend Mary. The Catholic School Girls are going to take over the world."

Dog Tag says: "Then they may be able to help us seal the Hellmouth of Canada that is found out in Alberta. We'll be able to send Buffy the Vampire Slayer out there to look for Stockwell Day."

Butch shrugs and says: "I thought he had moved into Queen's Park. It's all the same neo-conservative philosophy."

Dog Tag laughs at his own little joke and adds: "We'll send Buffy to Toronto. She can be a Sunshine Girl."

Jean holds up his book and says: "Dog Tag, the Northwest Rebellion was a big for the Canadian militia."

"Not really. It was really the American Gattling Gun that won the campaign. The

Canadian forces had better arms and the Metis ran out of ammunition.”

“They could never win. Just like Pontiac. He could never have driven the White Man out of North America.”

“He didn’t try to. The Ojibway simply wanted to re-open trade with the English on the same terms they had had before. They were not really been defeated. They got what they want. Their prayers were answered. They got all the booze they could drink, and then some. It’s like the Whites were waging chemical warfare on them in the form of alcohol. Booze did what bullets couldn’t do. But that came later. Pontiac was never beaten on the battlefield.”

“Hank is descended from Pontiac.” *Said Butch.*

“Maybe he’ll lead an uprising, too.” *Added Jean.*

Butch smiled and said: “Let’s hope not. The odds are overwhelming.”

Jean smiled back: “like David and Goliath?”

Turtle yells at them: “Will you guys shut up? I’m trying to sleep.”

Dog Tag adds: “Yeah. I’d better get back to bed. I’ve got an early day tomorrow.”

Jean stands up: “Ho-Ho-Ho Hummm. I’d better get back to bed myself. I’m starting to feel sleepy. And you make us leave so early.”

“That’s when we close. I don’t get overtime. And I need my beauty sleep, too.”

The two men go to their beds, saying goodnight as they do. Butch goes back to his book.

CHAPTER FIVE: "LATE NIGHT"

Butch closes the book that he has been reading and slowly gets out the Log Book as he speaks: "I think I'll look over some of the notes that I made about Hank when he was here. I wonder what's going to happen over there."

He starts turn pages, until he finds what he is looking for.

"Yes. Here it is. March 15. The Ides of March. The Night of the Suicide Threat. That's when I first met him. That was before I took that suicide prevention course. It was my first time dealing with a suicide threat. That is when Hank and I first met. Let me refresh my mind as to what happened back then. Here's what I wrote in the log book.

In the corner I wrote 'Notes made at 2:30 A.M. as soon after the relevant incidents as I could.' That's so I could use them in Court, or at a Coroner's Inquest if one should be needed.

Hank Mandawaub came in, very distressed. He is young, mid-twenties, slim but athletic looking. His arms are heavily tattooed with designs that look like they came from a Totem pole. He was limping badly, using a cane. He lay down, then he got up. He wrote a letter for his day worker, Sheila Steele. I quote it verbatim here.

'I regret to inform you that I have left the hospital. I was late getting back from a pass. It was the third time. You know the game? Three strikes and you're out. Well, the ball game's over and there are no extra innings in the game of life. I'm walking to the river where I'll be a lot more comfortable and welcome.'

Signed: Megwetch.

He said the signature had something to do with his warrior name.

Next, he went to leave. I offered to call Sheila. I was concerned because this looks like a suicide note. I got an answering machine. He left. She called back right away. I called out the door and caught him in time. He spoke with her. Then I did. She said it was a suicide note. We had better be careful. I should give him some paper and ask him to draw something,

As she suggested, I gave him some paper to draw on. He drew a sketch he described as the wounded warrior. It was the lean but muscular figure of an Ojibway warrior, carrying a tomahawk, and looking fierce and warlike. The warrior had a strong, rugged face, but he was crying.

Hank drew another picture after that. It showed the sun scowling, glaring down at things that were going on down on the earth below. He called the sketch "Grandfather Sun". It was a good sketch, very expressive.

After finishing withdrawing, he took some red beads from his medicine pouch and threw them in the garbage. He got up to leave again. I asked him where he was going. He said he was going to go back to the place where he had been staying before he came here. Then he added a post script to his letter: "P.S. Sheila, call me at 453-3717. That's Sonny Bear, who is a friend.

Signed: Hank Mandawaub .

P.P.S. See you tomorrow.

He was sent by cab to 145 Dundee Street. I watched him get into the taxi.

Then I called Sheila. She called him and then called me back. She told me that she had contracted with him for his own safety. (I later learned that making a contract with someone where they agree not to act on a suicidal impulse is a frequent practice in suicide

prevention. At the time, it seemed like a neat idea.)

Hank also called me to assure me that he was all right.

He is to see Sheila at 8:00 A.M. in the morning. I think he is safe for now.'

Well, that was the first time I met the guy. It was obvious from his art that he could draw. Before I got drawn off into more practical things, I grew up with a paint brush in my hand. Art was my life, mostly warplanes and soldiers. So this guy sounded like an interesting case.

He was recovering from a stroke brought on by drug abuse. That must have been especially hard on him. He was once a champion cross country runner.

Well, my log indicates that he was next here on March 22. About a week later. He had just been discharged from hospital.

The notes start out dealing with other people that were in that night. Let's see now...

'Quiet night.' That's my handwriting. 'Dog Tag dropped by to point out a drunk passed out beneath the stairs outside. He had seen rats near there recently, so the man could be in danger. It wouldn't be very nice to wake up without a nose. I went out and roused him. The guy could not walk a straight line. In fact, he could hardly walk at all. He smelled strongly of vodka. He refused an offer to send him to detox in a cab. I would not let him in here because of his condition. He lay down again on the ground. Police were called because in my opinion, the man was likely to be in danger, and needs to go to detox. He was passed out. He was gone when they arrived.'

Yes, I remember that night well. The constable that came around was Officer Bart McLachlin, an old friend that I had known years before. His hair is white now, and he must be nearing retirement. We had a nice chat and he went off to look for the drunk.

Later that night, Hank dropped by. My notes here are brief. "In the morning, he is moving into a new apartment. He is worried about it."

This night he gave me a smooth stone as a talisman. We had a long talk about art, and he told me much about his Ojibway culture. I told him I had friends who were Mohawk. His face grew dark and he said: "the Mohawk are my natural enemy." So I dropped it. I thought the wars between the different tribes had ended long ago, but memory still lingers. I have since learned that in the First World War, the idea of forming an all Indian unit was abandoned when the Ojibway would not serve beside their ancient enemies the Mohawk. So the ghosts of the past are very much alive, needing some modern Hiawatha to exorcise them.

This is when he first told me about being there when Dudley George was shot. He kept saying 'I saw him go down, I saw him go down.' He was haunted by the experience.

The next time he was in was in April. Let's see now.

What's this? April 11. Tom Mack. Yeah, I remember him all right. It isn't about Hank, but let's read it anyway.

'Tom Mack was in early. We had a good talk. He remains depressed. He has thoughts of suicide. He says he can't stand the thought of being sixty years old and still pounding the pavement. He says he has a suicide plan but won't discuss it. He is 59 years old. He says that his birthday is in February. (Maybe this could be a significant milestone.) He is still living in the past, as if five years ago was only yesterday. He was working two jobs at the time. One day, he came home from work and found that his wife and children were gone, as was his furniture. His life fell apart at that moment.'

I worried about Tom. He said he had a plan, That's not a good sign. He also had

nothing to live for: no plans for the future, except for walking the streets. And he didn't want to talk about it. By that time, I had taken the suicide prevention course. So I knew that it was serious.

I can't help but remember the professional wrestler known as Yukon Eric. He was very big and very strong. He was one of my childhood heroes. I saw him often when I used to go to the wrestling matches when I was a kid. He had a great running feud with Killer Kowalski, who had taken off his ear.

Later I heard that he had a book had been published that told an interesting tale. Yukon had been paid \$5000 and the ear had been pre-cut. I don't know if that is true or not, If so, it was a very good investment on the part of some promoter.

Well, one day Yukon Eric went home, just like Tom Mack did, to find that his wife had left with the children and had cleaned him out. He drove to a nearby church yard and blew his brains out. Love can destroy even the strongest man.

And love also destroyed Tom. A week later, he committed suicide. It has often been said that God will not burden any soul with more than it can bear, but as Edgar Cayce says, even at the Celestial level, mistakes happen.

God, grant me the serenity to accept that which I cannot change, the courage to change that which I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Lets get back to Hank. But those notes sure remind me that there are others out there with worse problems than my friend. Or me.

Here's the next time he was in. April 13...I remember that I was really tired out when I wrote these notes in the wee small hours of the morning.

'It has been an interesting night. I note that it is Friday the 13th and there is a full moon out. Maybe that explains it.

Dog Tag nearly got in a fight with Micky Dunn in the street out front. So, naturally, they both show up here for the night. Then, like long lost brothers, they sit down outside and tell each other fishing stories. Dog Tag is in a good mood. Too good. He may be starting to get manic again.'

Now, let's skip over these other entries. God, that night was like bloody bedlam itself around here. I got the cops in twice to help break up fights and cart away the fighters.

Here we go. Here's where Hank comes in.

'Hank Mandawaub came in just before midnight. A cab had taken off with his belongings when he didn't have the \$5.25 fare to get here. I gave the cab company a voucher, and got his belongings back. At least that avoids a charge of transportation fraud which is the last thing he needs right now.

He just got an eviction notice for next week. He has not told his day worker Sheila yet. He has to pay rent. He has no money left. I told him to contact her first thing in the morning.

Some of his friends have let him down again. He loaned money to his cousin, who lost it at the casino.

I gave him some paper and took some myself and we sat together and drew pictures for an hour.'

He told me about how to make a Spirit Chaser, and many other things. He told me about the elders of his people, and how they keep the ways of the past alive.

He told me of how the dawn of the new day of the Red Man is coming, how the

human race will again walk in the ways of the spirit. Then He shared a poem with me.

‘From my boat I see a Giant Turtle swimming by,
Her shell is like a moving rock that speaks to me:
“The Whole World is a giant Turtle
Swimming through the Starry Skies
Of the Universe.”’

I have added my own feelings as I typed it out for him.

‘In my heart I see that we are living
In a global village, riding on the back of the Turtle.
Without Her, we are lost.’

Then he shared a prayer with me:

“O Great Spirit,
Light of Light,
Whose Voice I hear
In the Whispering Breeze,
Hear me,
For I am small and weak,
I need your strength and wisdom, O Great One,
Not to be superior to my brothers and sisters,
But so that I can learn from the beautiful things
You have hidden under every leaf and rock.
Let my eyes ever be clear,
To see the beautiful red and purple sunsets,
Let my ears ever be sharp to hear your voice,
So that when this life fades from me like the setting sun,
My soul can come to you without shame.
Meetgwetch
(Thank You, in Ojibway)

We were both much calmer when he left to go back to his apartment.

CHAPTER SIX : “THE THUNDERERS SPEAK”

There is a loud peel of thunder and the room is bathed in pale blue light. Butch sits up with a start. Dog Tag jumps out of bed, trembling with fear. He walks over to Butch and talks in a hoarse whisper.

“The ghosts of the ‘Nam speak to me in the thunder.”

“It’s just a thunder storm passing overhead, Dog Tag.”

“I know, but ghosts do speak in certain kinds of weather, when its hot and humid, like the ‘Nam, or when there is thunder. I can hear them now.”

“What are they saying?”

“They don’t like what’s going on today. They say that we’re killing our planet. Even the dead can’t rest in peace thinking about it.”

“Come on, get a coffee. Let’s talk about the “Nam.”

“OK.”

They both go over and get a cup of coffee. There is another flash of lightning, followed two seconds later by thunder. Dog Tag still whispers:

“That one was not so close.”

“Maybe the storm is moving on.”

There is another flash of lightning, followed almost immediately by thunder.

“That was close. I spoke too soon. The storm may be here for awhile.”

“We should be careful to keep our voices down, Dog Tag. Those other guys are sleeping.”

“Those guys will sleep through anything. You wouldn’t believe how tiring it can be just pounding the pavement all day. Me, I’ve got to keep working at something. Idleness can be exhausting, because we were not meant to be idle.”

Having got their coffee, they go back to their chairs and sit down. Butch also whispers.

“The Viet Nam war ended many years ago, Dog Tag. For a lot of young people, it’s sort of like ancient history.”

“For me, it’s just like yesterday...Memories come flooding in at certain times, like when the weather gets like this.”

“Any particular memories?”

“I remember this one house where they kept young teenage girls. These girls were forced to do things you would not want to hear about. One of them was wearing a dress just like one that my daughter had back in Toronto. I thought, how would I feel if someone did those things to my daughter? The one night, just before dawn, someone blew that whorehouse up! Ha-ha-ha. You should have seen it burn. ‘Burn, baby, burn!’ After that, those girls had no more pain.”

There is another flash of lightning, another close peel of thunder. Both drink their coffee in silence for a moment. Butch speaks:

“It’s been a long time since you saw your daughter, hasn’t it?”

“Yeah. It’s been twenty years at least. But it seems like only yesterday. While I was over in the ‘Nam, their house burned down with them in it. I really freaked when I got the letter. I guess I was never the same after that. We all have turning points in our lives. Maybe some day, you will feel like that about the fire in your mother’s house.”

“With some things, time just does not pass the same way. Like, I remember going in after the fire. That was six months ago, in the oldest part of the winter. Outside, the snow was blown about in a strong wind until it stung on the face, like little arrows.

Inside the house, great beauty was wed to horror. The dining room became a palace covered with ice, where water from the fire hoses had frozen as it dripped from the ceiling. It was incredibly beautiful. In the dining room, a chair covered with ice glistened like an empty throne.

Yet my heart was sad. It was already February, but I felt like a cold November morning that gives grey warning of the Winter yet to come. I had lived in that house for thirty years and more, watching as my parents grew old and died. I had so many memories of happier times in that dark grey house. Now that’s all gone.”

“No, it’s not, Butch. It still lives on, inside of you. If you let it do so. I know. I’ve been through worse.”

There comes another peel of thunder, and a lightning flash as well. Dog Tag is silent, looking off into the distance for a moment, then he speaks in a voice that is almost nostalgic..

“It was in the mountains near to the Cambodian border. We were ordered to take an area around a mountain that we called old smoky, because of the mist that surrounded it in the morning. We soon took a nearby village and a couple of outlying farmhouses. They were deserted, but we torched them anyway. Ahead lay “Old Smoky”. As we moved through the cold rain, going into battle, one of the men began to hum the Battle Hymn of the Republic. Soon everyone was singing it. Only with different words. We sang the Battle Hymn of Lieutenant William Calley.

When we took the mountain, there was nobody there. But they left land mines that killed two of our guys and crippled a third. That was what the ‘Nam was like.

One of the guys that was killed was also a Canadian. Lots of us went, just like a lot of yanks fought in our Air Force in World War II, before Pearl Harbour brought them into the war. So I sort of figured that us going to help them was sort of like a reverse form of lend lease. Problem was, maybe they should not have been in that war in the first place. But I didn’t know that back then. I was raised on John Wayne movies.

Dog Tag sings a couple of lines from the Ballad of the Green Berets : “A hundred men will try today, but only three, win the green beret...”

He sips his coffee and goes on:

“Pin these wings, upon his chest, make him one, of America’s best...”

“Dog Tag, the guys are sleeping.”

“OK. OK. But you get the point.”

“Yeah.”

“Say I hear something the other day. Did you used to be a lawyer?”

“Yes. And I’m glad to be out of it. Soldiers aren’t the only ones who get shell shock from repeated exposure to stress. Only it’s a different kind of stress, that’s all.”

“Ever think of going back to lawyering?”

“No. I’ve had it with that business. I’ll just take away what I can from it, like I salvaged what I could from my house.”

“I hear there’s too many lawyers out there.”

“Yeah. There are. I would never have gone into law if I had known the way things would turn out. I loved the theatre, but my parents kept telling me there’s no living there.

You're a man. You've got to support a family. So a law career for me suited them just fine.

As long as I could just do court room work, most of which is legal aid, I was OK with it. The people in law are really snobby, though. I missed the artsy hippie types I used to hang with. Like my old friend Bev.

The courtroom could be like a theatre for me, and I could do Mark Anthony's speech from the balcony to every jury. I got to refining jury addresses, though. You're better off if you sound like you're reading the six o'clock news to them. And juries will have their own ideas anyway, whatever you say.

I hated everything else about law, absolutely everything. I'd go nuts sitting around an office in a suit sucking up to rich real estate types. Like my Dad loved flying in the Air Force. When he was promoted to a desk job, he couldn't handle it."

"I can't stand sitting still either. Some of us just are not put together that way. It's like a shark will drown if it isn't moving. It's built for speed, but not for standing still. If a shark is anesthetized, they have to walk him around a pool to keep him moving so he won't suffocate. I did that one winter when I lived in Florida. No wonder I like you, Butch. You're a lawyer, and I'm used to sharks."

"Most of my work was on Legal Aid. The Legal Aid crisis came along. No too many people remember that now. For months at a time, Legal Aid would not pay. The NDP government, that I thought was a friend, would not supply money for the fund. And Legal Aid is a government program, or at least it is supposed to be. We were just like civil servants without the rights of civil servants. That was when I first learned how to dodge creditors. People think that lawyers make a lot of money, but that's all crap. Like everybody else in this sweet land of ours, I was flying without a net.

Then the Tories got in and finished off what was left of the Legal Aid plan that we once had in this province. My business went down the tubes, and so did my health. But it wasn't with a bang, either. My business died a long slow whimper of a death that took years. I think that's more draining than sudden death by far..."

"Yeah. I remember hearing from old Tom about how he found his family gone. I had that happen too. That can be tough. But I can see your point. You're not that different from the rest of us."

"No one else is, either. They just think they are. It can take so little to turn a life around. I always say: 'There for the grace of God go I' After the fire, if my next door neighbour had not put me up, I might have wound up sleeping here. What people don't know is that any of them could wind up homeless."

Lying in his bed, Turtle let out a tremendous fart. Dog Tag says: "I don't think that was thunder."

"Neither do I." Says Butch.

He lets out another one, followed by a long "Ahhhh."

Dog Tag laughs: "Must be the beans we had at the sup kitchen last night."

Butch smiles and leans back: "Beans are very nutritious. They give you a lot of what you need from the food guide."

"And they taste good, too."

Turtle lets out another long fart, followed by another "Ahhh!" Dog Tag laughs again and says: "I'll bet there's many an Indian that's wanted to fart on a white man."

"That drunken Indian is doing a pretty good job of it."

Robbie yells from his bed: "Stop farting Dog Tag."

"It ain't me. It's Turtle."

"Then stop farting, Turtle."

"You're just pickin' on me because I'm an Indian." *Turtle lets out another long slow fart.*

"Ah, to hell with it." *Robbie lets out a long fart himself.*

Dog Tag laughs again: "Hey, guys. Gas warfare is against the Geneva Convention. God, Turtle, you smell like your guts are rotting out."

Butch adds grimly: "Maybe they are."

There is another peel of real thunder, followed by lightning. The monitor of the computer lights up by itself. There is a loud crackling sound.

Butch moves his chair back and looks at it, startled. Dog Tag moves over by him and stumbles into Butch. In the course of their movement, the screen is knocked around so that it faces into the room. Both of them back off and look at it. They see the blurred form of a great disembodied head appear in the middle of the screen, with large eyes staring out at them.:

Turtle gets up and joins them.

Butch asks: "What in the name of Heaven is that?"

Turtle sounds quite sober now. He says: "It's a Flying Head."

"A what?"

"A Flying Head. My people have legends about the Flying Heads out in the forests. They are strong spirits, they make strong medicine. There are many stories about them."

.Dog Tag says: "It's in the computer."

Butch says: "This is the age of the computer. So, now and in the future, ghosts will come to us through our computers. Look. The image is becoming clearer."

By now, Robbie Ryan and Jean Argent are waking up. Slowly and silently, they join the others in front of the computer.

Jean Argent says, sleepily: "That looks like old Tennessee."

Turtle says : "It is Tennessee."

A voice comes forth from the computer:

"I have one last song to sing, one last message to bring to you. You have all made mistakes. It's all right to make mistakes. We all do. I made more than my share. But you are alive. You can have a different future. Follow your dreams, Butch. Follow your dreams. They can come true.

And the rest of you. Forget the past.

Dog Tag, Dieppe was a failure, but it set up D-day. Your real mission in life still lies ahead of you. Julius Caesar was in mid life when he came to power. When you get discouraged, think about Julius. Maybe they will name a month after you someday. You never know."

Jean laughed at that: "I like that. It was in the merry month of Dog Tag. Old Earnie has still got a sense of humour."

*.The Flying Head says :"*Why not? You guys are even funnier from the other side."

CHAPTER SEVEN:

“HOMECOMING AT 4:00 A.M.”

There is a loud knocking at the door. The screen of the computer monitor suddenly goes blank.

Jean Argent says: “Hey, don’t go, Tennessee. This was just getting interesting.”

Says Turtle: “Them Flying Heads are real shy. I should have warned you. They usually disappear as soon as someone else comes. They do that so people will think you’re crazy when you talk about Flying Heads. Those Flying Heads are smart that way. That’s so you won’t go telling people about them. That’s how the Flying Heads have learned to survive in the modern world. They are still here among us, just like they were when we lived in the forest. Just like Bigfoot. All magic creatures are like that. You just have to learn how to see them. “

Butch adds: “I’ll bet a little Listerine helps you to get in the right mental state.”

Turtle says: “Have you tried it?”

Butch replies: “uh..No. Of course not.”

Turtle says, triumphantly: “Then don’t knock it.”

Jean Argent laughs at Butch: “I read that the Yogi guys in India took drugs too. They had their Soma. That’s where all mysticism began. Even the mystic stuff that you martial arts guys use began in India. It all came from drugs.”

Butch snarls : “Thanks, Jean. I really wanted to know that.”

There comes another knocking at the door, far more urgent than before.

Butch goes over to the door: “Knock, knock, knock, in the name of Beelzebub. Who’s there? Oh, it’s you?”

Two frantic figures rush in the door. The woman in the faded dress with flowers also wears a backpack. She is supporting a man with a cane who staggers in. He is wearing black sweatpants and a red Chicago Blackhawks shirt. He is an Indian, but he has some white blood: he could easily pass as French Canadian, which he has sometimes done. He’ll never admit it these days, though. He collapses into the chair.

Butch’s voice is full of fear as he says: “Hank! Suzanne! What’s happened?”

“They raided us. They closed us down. They came in like storm troopers in the night, right in the middle of the storm. They completely caught us by surprise. We never thought they would come in the middle of a thunderstorm.”

Hank’s voice is filled to the brim with fear. He is trembling as he speaks: “It is just like it was when they shot Dudley. It was happening all over again. Only this time, I had a gun.”

Suzanne looks at Butch almost defiantly: “He panicked and shot a cop!”

“I blew him away. I got him right between the eye balls at point blank range. Now his buddies will want to take my scalp. Just like they did with that cop killer from Ingersoll. They found his body in a shallow grave and blamed the biker gangs, but out on the streets we know the cops did it. They let word get out so that it

would scare us. If they catch me, they'll do me for sure. Then they'll probably blame the Warrior Society, and frame one of them."

Suzanne grabs Butch's shoulders and says: "We ran. And we got away for now. Butch, you gotta help us. Wait, Butch. Don't call the cops on us. Wait. There's someone coming to talk to you..."

Butch says: "I got a friend on the Force I can talk to. He'll make sure you'll be safe if you surrender. You might get off with some sort of temporary insanity, post traumatic stress disorder. Battered wives have used that as a defense."

Hank's voice is desperate: "People still die while they are in custody."

"Not here. That sort of stuff goes on out West. In north Saskatchewan and places like that. Not here in South Ontario."

Suzanne pleads: "Just wait. There's someone who stayed with us at our Tent City. You've got to listen..."

There is a further knocking at the door. Suzanne says "I'll get it." And she does.

A woman enters. She is about the same height as Butch and walks erect like a soldier. She wears a dark evergreen dress with brass buttons that give her the look of military brass without the official designation. She wears shiny black boots like a cavalry officer, giving her a 'power' look. She has a pretty full moon face that is ageless, and eyes that look like she has seen eternity itself.

Butch is flabbergasted. He stutters:

"Bev? Is that you?"

"Butch! You look like a Buddhist monk! That's cool." *She walks right over to him and smooths the top of his head. She purrs at him:* "You've got a cute cranium. I could shine it with the same rag that I use for my boots. Remember the good old days?"

"Wow. You're still crazy after all these years."

"And so are you, love. Remember old times?"

"Like they were yesterday."

"Yesterday can be tomorrow if you really want it to be. We can start up where we left off."

"I've made mistakes."

"So have I."

"Where have you been all these years, Bev? You just seemed to disappear after we had that fight. You faded away like morning mist in the sunlight after a real cool night."

"I thought it was over between us. So I went off to get on with my life. I hit the road."

"I looked for you and I couldn't find you. Like, it was over."

"It doesn't have to be. Come with me."

"Uh, I...I don't know." *Butch backs up a step.* "So many years have gone by. Where have you been?"

"I went all the way to China. There, I found a whole new universe. I've come back to share it. I can show you things that are better than drugs, teach you to turn on without them."

"What have you been doing all these years?"

"I was in the Chinese army. I was doing intelligence work for them. Because I was part white and all western, they started me out as an officer! Imagine that! I even became a Colonel. Just like my Dad was in the British army. It was like being nobility, back in the Middle Ages."

Dog Tag chimes in: "She's just like Richard the Lion Hearted come back from the Crusades to meet his bard."

She looks at him a moment, then dismisses him: "How boring."

Butch laughs: "You can still sound like a Hollywood producer."

"Come with me, Butch. Someday they will make a movie about us. Like 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'. We can be famous."

"What are you doing here?"

"I left the Chinese army, with regrets. But I was disillusioned. They are becoming just like the Americans anymore. Their factories are poisoning the air. And, you know, the suits that run those plants go strutting around thinking they are gods. In the good old days we would have had them out picking potatoes to teach them a little humility. Good honest work. That's what the premiere of Ontario believes in. So maybe we should make him harvest tobacco for awhile. I know of a nice farm down by Tilsonburg. Maybe someday we could snatch him and put him to work. But that's for later. For now, it's on to Michigan."

Dog Tag sings a line from a song: "Pickin' tobacco. Oh, Boy! Tilsonburg! Tilsonburg! My back still aches when I hear that word."

Bev smiles at him and says: "How boring." *He shuts up.* She continues:

"One day when I was stationed in Tibet I met a man who changed my life. He was doing Tai Chi sword form in a park, with a nice silver sword so sharp it could cut silk in mid air. He opened doors for me. I've come back to open them for you. If you'll let me."

"Of course I will. I still love you. Even after all these years."

"Were there others in your life?"

"Of course. But none like you. And you? Were there others in your life?"

Bev walks over and starts to caress Butch as she continues:

"How do you think I got to be a Colonel, goof? Sometime I'll tell you my adventures and you can write them down. You always wanted to be a writer. Sex sells. So I'll make you a best selling author."

"You really know how to get to a writer's heart."

"I'm trained to please men. What do you expect?"

"I'm not rich and powerful. Like you once wanted me to be."

"But you've got a truck, right? I've got a jeep. And we've got a problem."

"What problem?"

"How to get these people out of town. The cops are looking for them."

Dog Tag says: "Where are we going?"

Bev answers him: "Far, far away." *She steps in front of Butch and grabs him by the shoulders:* "Listen, goof. I've got a great idea. We'll all go camping up north."

Jean Argent says: "At Ipperwash? Oho, boy. I'd better wash my hair so my scalp will look nice on the mantle."

Butch says: "Cut the crap, Jean. This is serious."

Turtle says: "You can talk. You ain't got good hair like him. You ain't got no

scalp for an Indian to take. That's not fair. We'd just get the skin on the top of your head."

Bev laughs: "That would make a nice rag to shine my boots. But we'll scalp you some other time. There will be time for some fun later. I'll roast your toes over a campfire until you can't take it anymore. Remember what I did with that cigarette once upon a time?"

But now we've got to get serious. The cops will be looking for us at Ipperwash. So we'll out flank them. We'll circle 'round through the north and come back in from the west and hide out in Northern Michigan. We'll join the Michigan Militia. Then we convert them."

Butch blurts out: "Those guys are crazy right wingers. They are all gun nuts. I know. My cousin is one of them."

Bev puts her arm around his shoulder: "Don't worry, goof. I've thought of everything. I know where there's a 50 caliber machine gun buried up north. There's some other neat stuff, too. This old army guy had a big collection. He died, and his son just didn't have the heart to turn it in and have the cops destroy it. He had a psycho record, so he couldn't get an F.A.C. himself. So he buried the guns. He showed me where, so I know that they are there, out in the woods, in waterproof boxes. You gotta watch out for that water, goof. It's the lowest element, but it wears away the hardest steel. When the Michigan Militia see how well armed we are, they'll welcome us with open arms."

Butch says: "So we are going to join the Michigan Militia?"

Jean says: "All of us?"

Dog Tag says: "Why not? I sound like a good adventure. I always like a good adventure story. And this one will have lots of military stuff in it, too. Hey, Butch, you can get your buddy Little Ivan to join us. He can bring his Magnum. A good gun like that should be tried out in action."

"Cool." Says Bev. "That settles it. We'll join them, then we'll convert them to our holy cause to save Mother Earth from pollution."

Butch stammers: "I don't believe this...It must be midsummer madness, or an acid flash back or something."

Bev answers him: "You think it will soon be midnight, and the coach will turn into a pumpkin? Listen, goof, let me do the thinking for us. That was the problem before. You were thinking too much. Thinking will make your pretty little face break out in a frown and we don't want that to happen, do we? Smile. Trust me. Follow your dreams. There's things out there beyond your imagination."

She turns to the group as a whole: "Come on everybody. Let's head up to the northern woods. We'll be safe in the woods."

Dog Tag says: "After all, what do us homeless people have to lose? At least this way we can make things exciting."

Bev looks at him distainfully: "How boring."

Suzanne says frantically: "We've got to get out of here."

Bev announces: "We'll all go together. I'll be your high priestess. Just follow me into the woods today. Everybody OK with that?"

They all agree.

She stands in the middle of the room and says: "OK, now. Everybody stand around me. Make a circle."

Now join hands, as I lead you in prayer: ‘God, I offer myself to you. Build with me. Help me to overcome my difficulties, so that when I win out it will show others that your way of life works.

Let my light shine as an example to guide them in their darkness. Grant me strength as I go out of here to do your bidding.’”

Suzanne is frantic. She says: “Let’s go.”

Bev pause for a moment and then she adds thoughtfully:

“Join me I the Lord’s prayer. A moment of prayer can make us the calm spot in the eye of the hurricane. You’ll see.”

They do. After they finish, Robbie says: “I just felt an electric current go through my hands, or something.”

Jean says: “Or something.”

Bev shouts: “Let’s go. We must get out to the woods tonight.”

They all leave, shouting war hoops and things that include:

‘YA-HOOO! OH-AH-HOOO! REMEMBER PEAR HARBOUR! AND ‘ON TO THE NEW JERUSALEM!’”

THE END ?